

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for breeding tomato plants that produce tomatoes with reduced fruit water content comprising the steps of:

crossing at least one *Lycopersicon esculentum* plant with a *Lycopersicon* spp. to produce hybrid seed;

collecting the first generation of hybrid seeds;

growing plants from the first generation of hybrid seeds;

pollinating the plants of the most recent hybrid generation;

collecting the seeds produced by the most recent hybrid generation;

growing plants from the seeds of the most recent hybrid generation;

allowing plants to remain on the vine past the point of normal ripening; and

screening for fruit dehydration accompanied reduced fruit water content as indicated by extended preservation of the ripe fruit and wrinkling of the fruit skin, wherein the ripe fruit has lost at least 30% of its red ripe fruit water content.

2. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the steps of pollinating, collecting the seeds, and growing plants are repeated at least once.

3. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the step of pollinating includes self pollination.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the step of pollination includes back crossing with a *Lycopersicon esculentum* plant.

5. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the *Lycopersicon* spp plant is a *Lycopersicon hirsutum* plant.

6. (Original) The method according to claim 1 and additionally comprising the steps of:

crossing plants derived from hybrid seeds whose progeny show reduced fruit water content with a *Lycopersicon* plant;

growing the crossed plants; and
selecting plants with tomato fruits having an increased dry weight percentage as compared to fruit from a non-crossed *Lycopersicon*.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 6 wherein the steps of crossing and selecting are repeated at least once.

8. (Original) The method according to claims 1 wherein said crossing includes sexual crossing.

9. (Original) The method according to claims 1 wherein said crossing includes asexual crossing.

10. (Original) The method according to claim 9 wherein said asexual crossing includes somatic cell hybridization.

11. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 and additionally comprising the step of propagating the plants with tomato fruits having the desired characteristics of fruit dehydration accompanied by extended preservation of the ripe fruit, wherein the ripe fruit has lost at least 30% of its red ripe fruit water content.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 11 wherein the step of propagating includes the step of vegetative propagation.

13. (Original) The method according to claim 11 wherein the step of propagating includes the step of propagation by seed.

14. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 and additionally comprising the steps of:

obtaining hybrid seeds;

crossing plants derived from hybrid seeds whose progeny show reduced fruit water content with a *Lycopersicon* plant;

growing the crossed plants;

harvesting ripe tomato fruits before signs of dehydration thereof ; and

allowing the fruits to dehydrate after removal from the plant.

15. (Currently Amended) A tomato fruit of the *Lycopersicon esculentum* species, characterized by a capability of natural dehydration while on a tomato plant, natural dehydration being defined as loss of at least 30% of red ripe fruit water content ~~wrinkling of skin of the tomato fruit~~ when the fruit is allowed to remain on the plant after a normal ripe harvest stage, said natural dehydration being generally unaccompanied by microbial spoilage.

16. (Currently Amended) A tomato fruit of the *Lycopersicon esculentum* species, characterized by an untreated skin which permits dehydration of the fruit so as to obtain loss of at least 30% of red ripe fruit water content ~~wrinkling of the skin~~, said dehydration being generally unaccompanied by microbial spoilage.